



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Report Points Finger at Arthritis as Major Public Health Concern**

**(Salt Lake City, UT)** – Nearly one of every three Utahns over 18 years of age has arthritis according to a landmark Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report. The **Utah Arthritis Report** estimates that about 450,000 Utahns over 18 have chronic joint symptoms and/or doctor-diagnosed arthritis.

“This is the first report of its kind to look at arthritis risk factors and how common it is in Utah,” says Richard Bullough, Ph.D., UDOH Arthritis Program Manager. “The data represent a baseline against which we can compare future data and determine our efforts to lessen the burden of arthritis in Utah.” The data presented in this report come from the 2000 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey.

One of every six Americans has been diagnosed with arthritis, making it the leading cause of disability in the United States. In Utah, about one of every five individuals over the age of 18 (22%) has been diagnosed with arthritis. Many others with arthritis have not been diagnosed and are not being treated by a physician. By combining those who have not been diagnosed with persons who have, UDOH estimates that nearly one of every three (31%) Utah residents over 18 years has arthritis.

The report defines persons with arthritis as those who have either chronic joint symptoms for at least one month during the past 12 months and/or doctor-diagnosed arthritis. The word arthritis means inflammation of a joint and refers to more than one hundred separate conditions that cause a combination of symptoms such as pain, aching, stiffness and swelling in or around a joint. The most common conditions include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia.

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Highlights from the report include the following:

- More Utah women than men have arthritis (35% vs. 27%).
- Nearly three-fourths of Utah residents with arthritis are adults 18 to 64 years.
- Persons with arthritis are 10 times more likely to report that pain limited their activities for 15-30 days during the past month than persons without arthritis.
- Nearly one-third of persons with arthritis have chronic joint symptoms only, and have not been diagnosed with arthritis by a doctor.
- The prevalence of arthritis is 1.6 times greater among Utah adults who are obese than among those who have a normal body weight.
- Of Utah adults with arthritis, 22 percent consider their health status as fair or poor, compared to seven percent of adults without arthritis.
- Utah adults with arthritis average six days of poor physical health per month, while individuals without arthritis average only two days of poor physical health per month.

“The first step to lessen the burden of arthritis is to find out how many Utahns are affected, and then to assess the associated medical and social costs,” explained Bullough. The UDOH Utah Arthritis Program is continuing to increase community awareness, develop effective partnerships, increase the use of proven arthritis education programs, and to promote physical activity in those with arthritis.

The Utah Arthritis Program is funded through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Utah program began in 1998 and partners with the Utah Arthritis Foundation, local health departments, other related UDOH programs, and many other key parties in the community. The program’s main goal is to enhance the quality of life for Utahns affected by arthritis.

For additional information about the **Utah Arthritis Report**, arthritis in general, and ongoing Arthritis Foundation programs and services contact the Utah Arthritis Program at (801) 538-9291. Portions of the report may be viewed at [www.health.utah.gov/arthritis](http://www.health.utah.gov/arthritis).